

LWF



together

green and just



2012
Guidebook

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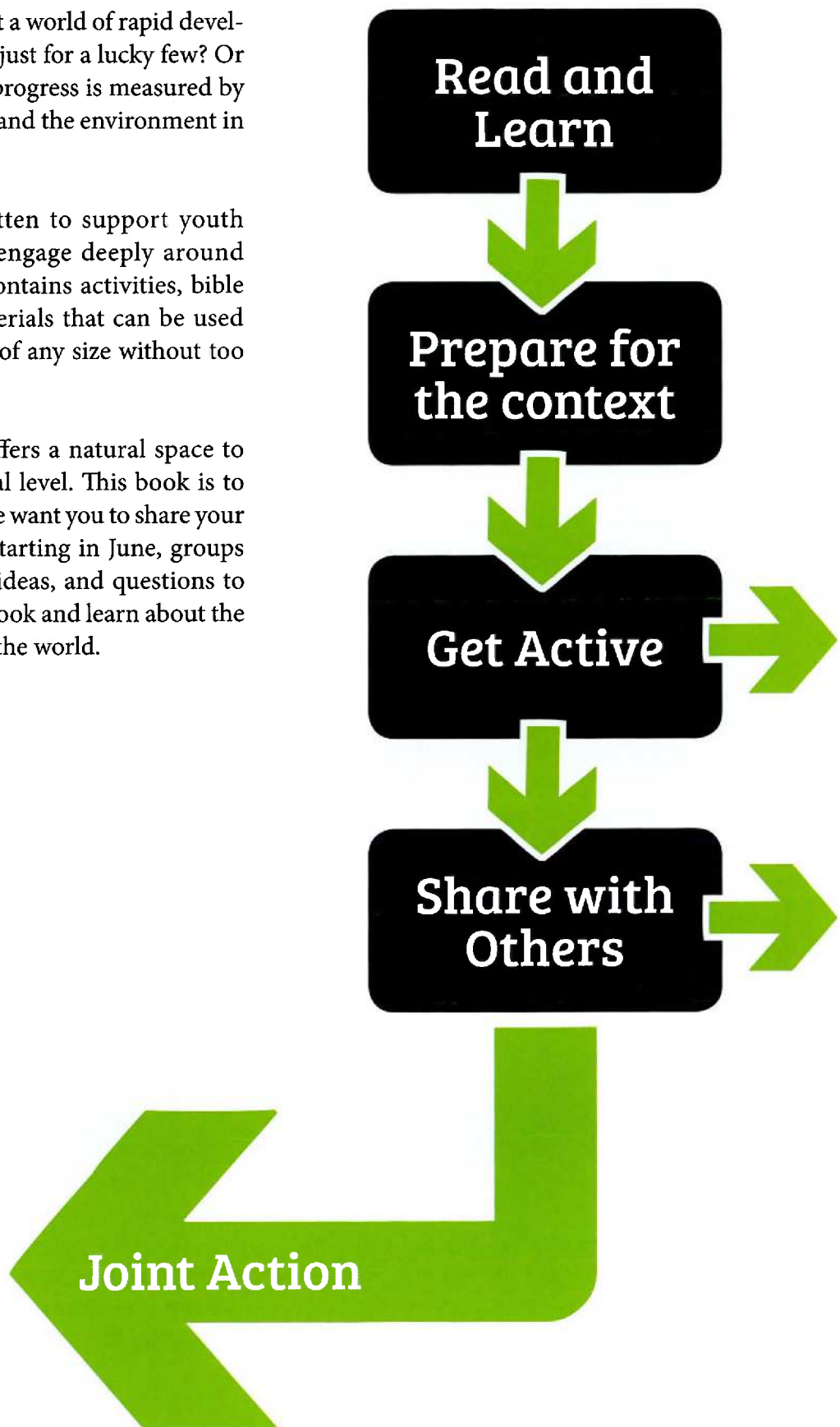
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Introduction

The choice is ours. Do we want a world of rapid development and great wealth, but just for a lucky few? Or do we choose a world where progress is measured by how people treat one another and the environment in which they live?

This resource has been written to support youth groups and camp teams to engage deeply around the issues of eco-justice. It contains activities, bible studies and background materials that can be used with groups of young people of any size without too much advance planning.

The Lutheran communion offers a natural space to link local actions at the global level. This book is to help you take a journey, and we want you to share your progress with us as you go. Starting in June, groups can contribute their photos, ideas, and questions to the LWF Youth page on Facebook and learn about the work of other groups around the world.



From Groaning to Glory

Bible Study on Romans 8:18-23

By Stanislav Palau

If you give a child the option, they will always choose one piece of candy today over the promise of a bag full of candy tomorrow. To children only the present seems real, and the future so far away.

We can use this analogy in our Christian life. Even if we know as Christians that we will inherit eternal life and everlasting communion with God, it is still difficult to cope with our day-to-day difficulties.

This is why at the beginning of this passage, Apostle Paul gives his reader a word of encouragement: our sufferings do not compare with the glory that we will share as children of God. In simple terms, the benefits of our relationship with God far outweigh the price of our daily struggles. Through our present sufferings, the greater glory will be revealed.

But people are not the only ones who suffer. Apostle Paul presents an image of creation longing for its liberation: it is *groaning*. This description of a universe that is wounded mirrors our current reality. We don't need to go far from home in order to see how creation suffers. It is part of our everyday experience. But sometimes we are so focused on ourselves that we do not notice the groaning of creation anymore.

What is groaning? Groaning is a deep, inward response to suffering. It is both personal and intense, an agony so deep it cannot be put into words. Groaning is a universal language, experienced by all of God's creation.

From this passage we also learn that suffering of creation is not natural. The world was not created by God this way, but is so as the result of human sin. And it is not only the consequence of the fall of Adam and Eve, but also the result of the daily small falls of each of us. It is our decisions and actions that influence the environment. *The creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God.* We choose to be stewards or torturers of creation, to reveal it, or to continue to exploit it.

But the apostle's message goes beyond simply taking note of this unfortunate situation. It is in fact good news, for the yearning of creation is described in terms of childbirth. The image of creation "groaning in labor pains" evokes both God's curse on Eve (Gen. 3:16) and the promise of its reversal – the new life. In this passage we find a very powerful and amazing message: God in Christ is not saving individuals only, God is at the task of saving all the universe. Adam's entire loss is captured by Christ's complete victory. This is an image of the return of paradise.

The vision of Apostle Paul is striking: present suffering is not merely local, but it is cosmic, it is not only people, but all of creation. Future glory will not be given by God only to human beings, but the entire world will participate.

Still more important, the text speaks of the role of believers, of those whose life is rooted in the spirit of God. As believers in a world marked by imperfec-

tion and unrest, the presence of the Spirit brings us into a deeper solidarity with the rest of creation. Our sighing, the voice of the spirit within us, merges with the longing of creation. **Our groans are prayer, the expression of a dialogue with God.** Through the son and the Spirit, God has become one with creation to such an extent that the cry of the creature's wounded heart becomes the driving force of its liberation.

Discussion

1. Do you usually mention the “groaning of creation”? How does it influence your attitudes and behavior?
2. To what extent does your faith enable you to live in deeper solidarity with the suffering of the human family?

3. Does the idea that all of creation is called to the glory of God change your understanding of faith?
4. Where do you hear the groaning of creation in your neighborhood? Is there something you can do about this? How can you help others to hear this groaning too?

Prayer

Christ Jesus, you called us with all of creation to the freedom of the glory of the children of God. Risen Lord, you gave us the first fruits of the Spirit, enable us to be good stewards of a creation which is groaning in labor pains of the new universe. Help us to appreciate the beauty of your world and to be attentive to its sufferings and needs. Amen.



What is Eco-Justice?

By Guillermo Kerber



We often hear about disasters caused by extreme weather. Droughts, floods, hurricanes and cyclones cause thousands of victims every year, and they seem to be happening more and more. This is not just our perception, but scientific fact. An increase in the frequency and intensity of tropical storms, hurricanes and cyclones is one of the consequences of climate change.

These are not the only ecological crises in the news. We have been shocked by the nuclear accident after

the tsunami in Fukushima, Japan. We have been traumatized by the massive oil spill from offshore drilling by BP in the Gulf of Mexico. Still there are many other man-made environmental disasters that we do not hear about.

This ecological crisis has become part of our culture. And human activities are responsible for a large part of it. But what does this ecological crisis have to do with our Christian faith?



A biblical imperative

The bible calls us to care for the whole of creation:

The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it (Genesis 2:15- NIV).

Life is created, sustained and made whole by the power of God's Holy Spirit (Genesis 1; Romans 8).

God creates human beings out of the dust of the earth (Genesis 2).

Sin breaks relationships among humankind and with the created order (Genesis 3 and 4; Jeremiah 14, Hosea 4, 1-3).

Bearing the marks of human sin, creation waits in eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed (Romans 8, 19 - NIV).

God provided all creatures with the conditions to live life as it is meant to be, in specific relation towards one another. When creation is threatened, we are called to speak out and act as an expression of our commitment to life, justice and love.

Together with this concern for the whole creation, including the human beings in it, the Bible also teaches us the centrality of justice for Christians. The God of the Old Testament is a God of justice. The Torah, the law, makes explicit and translates in practical terms what it means to act justly:

He [God] secures justice for widows and orphans, and loves the alien who lives among you, giving him food and clothing (Deut. 10, 18-19 - NEB)

God is then a God who does justice, who cares for and gives security to the poor, the vulnerable and the excluded and responds to their basic needs. In the second part of the Hebrew Bible, the prophets reaffirm what it means to act justly:

Cease to do evil and learn to do right; pursue justice and champion the oppressed, give the orphan his rights, plead the widow's case (Is. 1, 16b-17 - NEB)

The biblical prophets also long ago articulated the intrinsic connection between ecological crises and socio-economic injustice, railing against the elites of their day for the exploitation of peoples and the destruction of ecosystems:

The earth itself is desecrated by the feet of those who live in it because they have broken the laws, disobeyed the statutes and violated the eternal covenant. For this a curse has devoured the earth and its inhabitants stand aghast (Isaiah 24, 5-6a)

In the New Testament, Jesus himself expressed justice and care for the poor as essential to his mission. This is reflected, for instance, in the overture of the Sermon on the Mount, in what can be considered the programmatic discourse of Jesus: *Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God*, and in some verses later: *Blessed are those who are hungry and thirsty for justice* (cf. Luke 6:20ff and Matthew 5:3ff - NEB). And Paul in his letter to Romans wrote, *We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time* (Romans 8:22).

Based on these biblical foundations, we have developed the concept of ecological justice and climate justice-- or better yet, eco-justice.

Ecological justice, economic justice and eco-justice

Ecology is the study of relationships between organisms and their environments. Ecological justice is the ethical dimension of these relationships. It includes social transformation, care for the earth as the household for all, and the protection of the most vulnerable communities. Ecological justice applies to individual, corporate and government actions. It relates to equity, solidarity and environmental standards and addresses issues of pollution and environment degradation among others. Many social, environmental, peasant, indigenous and feminist movements have placed the demand for eco-justice at the center, reminding us that economy and ecology represent two interrelated and inseparable perspectives on God's household of life.

Climate change is a matter of justice because those who are and who will be the most affected are the poor and vulnerable communities in the global South. People living in the developing world are much more dependent on natural resources for their livelihoods. They also have the least resources to deal with the effects of climate change, such as if they have to move

because their land becomes infertile, or they lose their home to flooding. It is a matter of justice because people living in poverty have contributed the least to climate change, which has been caused by the carbon emissions of a global model which promotes infinite growth and over-consumption.

The term **economic justice** looks at how life is organized in terms of production, distribution and consumption of material goods and services. Our quest for economic justice is one to bring equality and fairness to systems across society, within institutions like government, the marketplace, churches, communities and others. Economic justice and social justice are often used to mean the same thing. Social justice is about restoring the balance of these relationships of the organized human interactions that we call institutions –churches, communities, education systems— so that no one is more disadvantaged or more privileged than another.

Eco-justice brings together ecological justice with economic justice. Both ecology and economy share the same etymological root: “eco”. “Eco” comes from the Greek word *Oikos*. *Oikos* or *oikia*, in ancient Greek is the house or the household. Economy is then the law, or *nomos* of the house, and ecology the discourse, or *logos* on the house. Ecumenism also has the same root. Ecumenism is the whole inhabited world--*oikoumene*. Thus, from an ecumenical perspective,

when we talk about eco-justice, we include ecological justice and economic justice as well as specific domains like climate justice.

A spiritual matter

As Christians we are called to care for creation and the poorest and to promote eco-justice as an integral part of our vocation and mission. This call goes beyond an ideological stand. It is rooted in our Christian spirituality. **Spirituality is also part of the specific contribution Christians and churches can make to ecology, environment and eco-justice issues.**

We often forget that the same Holy Spirit, the *ruach* in Hebrew, who hovered over the waters (Gen. 1:1) is the grounding for Christian spirituality. *Ruach* means wind or storm, life-giving breath, the power which is active in and among all things. It is a feminine term. The Spirit pushes us to translate into practical ways our concern for the threatened creation and for eco-justice. How much is our way of life --what we eat, what we wear, the way we travel-- sustainable for the earth, for human beings and for future generations? God's Spirit, the same Spirit who pervades the whole of creation, gives us the energy to continue struggling for eco-justice, despite the difficult circumstances we face and sustains our “hope against hope” (Rom 4, 18) opening us to the newness that is possible in our lives and in the world.



Water Crisis in Kolkata, a Simulation Game



Sometimes at workshops and trainings it seems like there is a lot of talk, but at the end of the day nothing has changed. Simulation games try to bring “the real world” into the safe space of a youth group or camp. Participants take on the roles of people who are in disagreement about a real issue. They must act and respond to the situation like in real life.

This has three major benefits. The participants learn about the issues through having to engage deeply in them. They also understand more about the political process. The participants also learn more about themselves by how they plan a strategy and implement it.

Leading a simulation game

Leading a simulation game is not always easy. It is important for the leader to effectively set the stage so that everyone participating can comfortably adopt their roles. The leader must both enforce the rules, as well as be flexible and creative. Sometimes the game does not go as expected. When this is the case, the leader must change the story to make it work for the group.

After the game, a discussion can help participants understand the meaning, and reinforce what they have learned. Here are some possible questions for after the game has ended:

- ◆ How did you feel in your role?
- ◆ Did you have the impression you could achieve your objectives?
- ◆ Please read your role description aloud to the other groups. Are you surprised about the role description of the other groups?
- ◆ Do you think the simulation was realistic?
- ◆ What negotiating strategy did you use?
- ◆ What did you learn about economy?
- ◆ What should the role of churches be in these situations?
- ◆ What should the role of youth be?
- ◆ How can we help youth to fulfill their role?

Information package for the participating groups

1. General Background
2. Role descriptions
3. For full background information about the actual water crisis in Kolkata, print out pages 47-53 from “Big Cities, Big Water Challenges” by WWF:

<http://bit.ly/qp4GtQ> or http://www.wwf.de/fileadmin/fm-wwf/pdf_neu/WWF_Big%20Cities_Big%20Water_Big%20Challenges.pdf

Print out one copy for each team. This information will help make the game practical and realistic. However if it is not available, the game should be possible without it.

General Background

In the city of Kolkata, access to water is a big problem. Less than 80 percent of households have running water, and it is only available for about 16 hours a day. The city pipes are old and leaky, and large neighborhoods are often cut off from the water supply. The sewage system is under developed, and public toilets are few and unsanitary. Many poor residents get their water from wells that they have drilled themselves, but the water quality varies, and is often unsafe.

The situation will only get worse if no changes are made, but water access has been a highly politicized for decades. Strong political groups have argued that water must remain largely free of charge for private households. Others claim that this leads to waste and has kept the system seriously under funded.



Setting for the game

In order to address the issue, a consortium of Kolkata businesses and foreign investors has been formed under the name Water for Kolkata. They have made a formal offer to the authorities of greater Kolkata to run the metropolitan water supply system. They have offered to build new pipe infrastructure as well as operate the water supply system. They promise to ensure water access 24 hours a day, for a least 80 percent of all households. The city is free to discontinue its own water authority at an agreed date. From this time on for the next ten years, the city must provide the same amount of money it was spending on the public system as an annual lump sum to the Water for Kolkata consortium. Meanwhile, Water for Kolkata is permitted to charge the households and businesses for the water services that they provide.

The Kolkata City Council is considering this offer. To assess it, the council has started a consultation process to receive feedback from civil society. The council has made clear that input from civil society will be very important to their final decision.

The following organizations are invited to send in statements. They are also informed that they can make a two-minute presentation to the city council about their position.

- 1. Chamber of Commerce Greater Kolkata
- 2. Freedom Ideas
- 3. Rainbow Alliance Kolkata
- 4. Water for Kolkata
- 5. Ecumenical Council of Churches in Kolkata
- 6. Youth for Eco-Justice
- 7. Future in Solidarity for Kolkata
- 8. International Association of Business Students, Chapter Kolkata

Rules

The game leadership (City Council of Greater Kolkata) gives additional information and monitors the game.

- 1. All participants are members of teams that are described on the next page.
- 2. The teams can only communicate with other teams in writing (except for the occasions organized for this purpose by the leadership team).
- 3. All letters must be in writing with two copies (one for the team to keep, the other for the game leadership).
- 4. Every letter has to include the sender (name of the team) and the addressee (name of the team)
- 5. The game leadership may authorize actions that go beyond writing letters. However, this requires a written application by the team to the game leadership.



Phases of the Game

(All the following information is only known by the game leadership and revealed in the course of the game to the teams).

Phase 1:

The groups start playing according to the basic information. They are encouraged to develop their position and explore possible coalitions. Coalitions are necessary since there are so many stakeholder groups. However, coalitions can only be explored in writing via letters. (At least 90 minutes)

Phase 2:

The City Council (the game leadership) calls for a first hearing. All groups have two minutes to present their position. There is no statement from the city yet.

Phase 3:

Now that every groups position is known, groups continue to work in coalitions and seek concessions from Water for Kolkata. The meeting room can be booked for ten-minute bilateral meetings to work on coalition building.

Phase 4:

The final hearing is organized by the City Council. All groups have two minutes to present their statement. Water for Kolkata gets three minutes to explain their renewed offer. The city council (leader) announces their decision and the game closes. The city council bases its decision on the strength of arguments and the power of coalitions.

Phase 5:

The group reflects on the game (see discussion questions).



Group Descriptions:



Chamber of Commerce Greater Kolkata

This information is only known by the members of the group.

You are advocating for the businesses in Kolkata. Therefore, it is clear that you are promoting and supporting the offer from Water for Kolkata. That is your job. However, there is also a wider interest. A deal like the one sought by Water for Kolkata would open up new possibilities for companies. There are so many things the private sector can do better than the state – for a fee. You will have to work hard to ensure this opportunity works out. After that, the sky is the limit.

Freedom Ideas

This information is only known by the members of the group.

The free market solves every problem. That has been the deep conviction of Freedom Ideas for many years. Therefore, you are excited to support any effort to make the public sector smaller in your city and to give more responsibilities to private business. Water for Kolkata's offer is exactly that -- at least that is what you would say publicly. What you would not say publicly is that there is not much free market involved in this arrangement at all. Water for Kolkata would just be handed another monopoly. You are sure it will be better managed than the public sector. But will it really create more value for the consumer? Still, you are inclined to support Water for Kolkata's push. However, you are interested in getting something out of it, also for your small think tank. Some support in funding would definitely help.

Rainbow Alliance Kolkata

This information is only known by the members of the group.

Nature is India's biggest treasure. This treasure has been stained and highly threatened, especially in a busy and over-crowded city like Kolkata. There are not many who will stand up for nature, but you will. You will do whatever is necessary in order to protect the holy Ganges river from further threats be it by negligence, ignorance or greed. From this perspective, you are not necessarily opposed to private sector companies taking over environmental services, but the rules have to be crystal clear. You will ensure that every decision taken by the city of Kolkata adheres to the highest environmental standards.

Water for Kolkata

This information is only known by the members of the group.

You are the consortium that made the offer to the city of Kolkata. Your calculations reveal that it could be a good deal. You are confident that running the water supply system can be done with half of current staff, which is roughly 50 percent of the current budget. Since the city is going to pay you 100 percent of the current operations costs, that leaves 50 percent to invest in improving the infrastructure. Therefore any fees that households pay are direct profit. And these fees are going to rise over the years, slowly but surely. You really want to make this deal, but only as long as it will promise a decent profit. Therefore, you might be willing to make some minor concessions. You would also be willing to "give additional arguments" to other organizations to join your point of view.

Ecumenical Council of Churches Kolkata

This information is only known by the members of the group.

You are representing the Christian churches in Kolkata. While only two percent of the population is Christian, you recognize the call to advocate for the marginalized and to bring ethical considerations into the public realm. Therefore, you have been concerned about water access in Kolkata for quite some time. While for many members of the middle class access to water is rather unreliable, 20 percent of the population do not have access to water services in their homes at all. Therefore, discussions in your churches are mixed. Wouldn't it be better to get an improvement of services for the majority of people instead of leaving everything as it is? Or would it be better to fight against development that further marginalizes the poorest while making services more expensive for everybody? The Ecumenical Council is resolved to be part of the conversation, to learn about the points of view of the actors and to advocate for a stand that does not alienate too many of your members.

Youth for Eco-Justice

This information is only known by the members of the group.

You are a group of young Christians passionate about justice. In the biblical tradition, you find many instances in which God is the one demanding justice and it is in support for the poor and the marginalized. However, in your reading of the bible, God's call for justice is not limited to just human creation, but goes beyond to the whole of creation. Just relationships are needed everywhere, and the gifts given by God should be used to further these just relationships, not endanger them. Therefore, you are very interested in the process started by the offer of Water for Kolkata. You are going to develop criteria and are committed to fully engaging in the public debate.

Future in Solidarity for Kolkata

This information is only known by the members of the group.

Your organization is a beacon for the rights of workers and the poor in Kolkata. You are the ones who make sure that special interests are not prevailing, but the rights of communities. Fat cat capitalists are trying to take over this beautiful city that has been built by the sweat and blood of countless workers. You are categorically opposed against the Water for Kolkata offer. The city of Kolkata needs not less but more public companies. Yes, improvements of the services are necessary in order to also provide the marginalized with coverage. But this should be paid for by the rich through higher taxes. Your realism tells you that there are parts of the public who do not yet fully subscribe to your political understanding. Therefore, you will seek coalitions that support your outcome.

International Association of Business Students, Chapter Kolkata

This information is only known by the members of the group.

You are a membership organization of students and alumni studying management. The main goal of IABS is to support the members through networking in order to promote their careers. However, a secondary purpose of the organization is to engage in important public debates. The future of the water supply in Kolkata definitely falls into this category. There is no question; you are in favor of good management. And the water services in Kolkata could be managed a lot better. Your focus is to provide your members with future opportunities. Therefore, you are interested in changes to management structures like the one foreseen. However, there are voices in your membership who doubt whether a privately managed monopoly is necessarily better than a public one. Perhaps it would be better to introduce some ideas of competition into the discussion.

Lazarus the Dalit

Bible Study on Luke 16:19-31

By Jeyathilaka Prathaban V. and Vethamuthu Rajaretnam C.

In Luke 16:19-31, we read the parable of a rich man and a poor man. The author of Luke's gospel is telling the story of the economic imbalance of the society in which he lived. The Jesus of Luke is concerned about this imbalance and tries to explain the lifestyles of the earth and heaven. The rich man is extravagantly clothed and displays outward splendor, pomp and exuberant joviality. The beggar Lazarus is an icon of hunger and poverty. Heaven is symbolized by Abraham.

In this chapter, we can interpret Lazarus as a marginalized Dalit man who is struggling for dignity. In India, Dalits are people outside the caste structure. Thought to be unclean, they are widely discriminated against, especially in the rural areas. The rich man can be interpreted as a capitalist and a symbol of industrialization. In this parable, Lazarus struggles for life, but the rich man enjoys his life full of money, and selfishly guards it. The name "Lazarus" identifies somebody who has lost his identity.

Upon their death, Lazarus goes to heaven, and the rich man to Hades. It is not the purpose of the parable to give information about the unseen world. The concept of heaven and hell can be questioned from an ecological perspective. But the passage wants to stress one thing: oppression of the weak will be judged by God the creator.

When we approach this chapter from an ecological perspective, we see that the means of production for Lazarus were corrupted by capitalist exploitation. This attitude will be punished by God. The rich man is an icon of consumerism.

When we waste resources through over-consumption and an economy that only values market gains, all living creatures are affected. The new heaven and the new earth are in this world only. Life is only possible if we stop oppressing the earth. The earth is the body of our God.

In the parable the rich man was crying for a drop of water when he was in hell. The suffering of the rich man is equal to the thirst among all living things on earth. As a supporter of oppression, he is crying of thirst. However, today water is often polluted because of industrialization, heavy construction and urbanization. The rich man had regarded himself as totally independent. He never needed to ask for anything from anyone when he was on earth. Now, he begs for help, even if it is only a single drop of water for his thirsty tongue from the hand of the formerly despised poor beggar, Lazarus the Dalit.

The oppression of the earth is condemned and punished by God. Too often, we are like the rich

man who is asking for signs and symbols. As people of God, it is important for us in order to understand what will we do for the next generations. People like Lazarus struggling for life will become the judges on judgment day. The forgiveness and the drop of water from the hands of the oppressed will mean life for the oppressors. As friends of Lazarus, we ought to be a symbol of simple life, loving nature, and not be like the rich man who accumulated wealth on earth.

Discussion

- 1. How do you measure wealth?
- 2. How did the rich man squander the earth?
- 3. How did Lazarus lead a life as a friend to the environment?
- 4. Can you believe the earth is the body of God? In what ways?

Prayer

Our parent God, please give us your wisdom to realize what we do against your body, the earth. We are also thirsty like the rich man who worshipped mammon. We ask you to guide us not through signs, but through the way Lazarus lived. We commit ourselves before you to live as friends of green justice. Amen.



Saving the Yasuní Rainforest

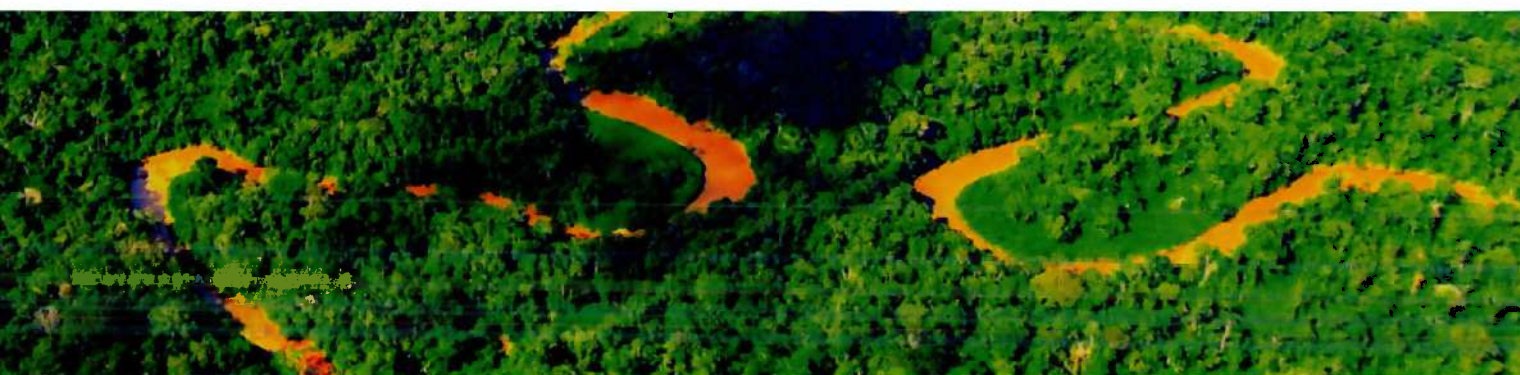
Yasuní National Park is one of the last pieces of untouched nature in the world, home to ancient rainforests rich in diversity and the last indigenous people in Ecuador living in voluntary isolation. It is thought to have more species of plants and animals in one hectare than the entire continent of North America.

But an estimated one billion barrels of oil lie under the soils of the Yasuní, and the government of Ecuador has to decide if they will exploit them. While the revenue would bring in around 3.9 billion dollars for a population hungry for development, the oil would only satisfy world consumption for about 11 days.

What would you choose? The government of Ecuador has chosen to save the Yasuní. But it is not so simple. The government has made an offer to the world: it is willing to protect the Yasuní forever, but it wants conserving the Yasuní to be recognized as a service to humanity-- and it wants to be compensated for the money it would have received from oil companies.

The government of Ecuador is not asking for the full amount of money the oil would bring. They are asking for half this amount, and promising to use it for sustainable development. Some countries have already started contributing to the fund that is administered by the United Nations Development Program. This comes in part as a result from civil society, including churches, asking governments to contribute their share.

The example of Yasuní is fascinating because it is a new model of conservation. How much will we pay not to do something? It is inspiring to learn that we can still protect the great treasures of the earth from exploitation. **But it also raises many questions, like how much is a priceless forest worth? And who should pay for it? Is this eco-justice?** There are similar treasures in other places in the world. Shouldn't they be protected like the Yasuní?



Why should the Yasuní be protected from oil drilling?

Climate change:

The forest is an important carbon sink, meaning that it naturally removes carbon from the atmosphere

Human rights:

Indigenous people have lived in the area for millennia

Environment:

Drilling would result in massive loss of species

More information: <http://www.yasunigreengold.com>



Facts about Yasuní:

Country: Ecuador

Area: 9820 km² (the size of Hawaii)

Possibly the most biodiverse place on earth

Indigenous peoples: Huaorani, Tagaeri and Taromenane

Manna and Quail: As much as they needed

Bible Study on Exodus 16:1-18

By Tsiry Endor

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This is the story of a journey. The name of the book of Exodus comes from the Greek word exodus that means “expedition, procession or departure.” In Exodus we can find the entire story of how the Israelites, guided by God and led by the prophet Moses, were delivered from slavery in Egypt and traveled to the land God promised. The verses here explain the hard environment that the Israelites traveled through to get to the land that God promised them. At the time, traveling through the desert seemed even worse than slavery and death to the Israelites. But God made it into an opportunity to show them how much he loved them.

Upon reaching the desert, the children of Israel took one look at it and compared it to death. They took their worries to Moses and Aaron who had led them since they left Egypt. They grumbled and fussed saying “you have brought us to the desert to starve.” But Moses and Aaron knew that God was in control of the journey. The two men were messengers chosen by God to improve the communication between the Israelites and God. “Who are we?” Moses said, “You are not grumbling against us but against the Lord.”

The Israelites didn’t know if they would ever reach their destination. Just like any trip, it took time, energy, preparation and a lot of good will. But as far

as they could see, it was impossible to plan anything, especially the meals because there was no food.

In this story, there are three main groups of characters. First, the Israelites, who were sure there was no food in the desert; second, Moses and Aaron, who encouraged the Israelites to trust in God; and third, God who had a great plan for all of them since the beginning.



God heard their complaining and understood that the Israelites were having difficulty trusting the plan. Before they arrived at the desert, the Lord had freed them from slavery and performed many miracles. But upon reaching the desert, the Israelites doubted God’s plan. Even as they doubted, God did not get angry with them. He wanted to see up to what point

the people of Israel would follow his instructions. The Lord wanted to maintain a relationship of trust with the people of Israel. So the Lord took the environment that the people feared so much and provided the bread and meat they wanted in abundance.

In the evening a flock of quail, a small bird, covered their camp. So they caught the birds and had meat to eat. At sunrise, manna, the bread from heaven, took the place of the morning dew and covered their camp. God instructed them to only take enough for that day. On the sixth day, God told them to gather twice as much, since the next day was the day of rest. In this process God taught them patience and trust and how to live one day at a time, one meal at a time. The Israelites followed God's instruction, though they did not know what would happen tomorrow, and were not able to control everything. They gathered, measured and shared the food that came in abundance equally. And everyone had exactly as much as they needed.

Discussion

1. If you were preparing to go on a journey what are two things you would like to bring with you? Why?
2. What would you do if you didn't have one of those things? How would you feel?
3. How would you feel if a friend promised to carry them for you? Would you trust them?
4. Why does God want our trust? When was a moment in your life when you needed to trust God?
5. In what ways can we improve our relationship of trust with God?

Activity

Sit in a circle or a straight line. Take an A4 size paper pass it around the group and allow each person to cut off a piece of the paper.

Discussion

1. Did everyone get a piece? Who did and who didn't?
2. Are some pieces larger than others? How did that affect the piece of the last person?
3. In the manna and quail story, the Israelites each took the same measurement of manna to eat. What would have happened if some took more?
4. Are there situations in our world today that we can compare to this activity?
5. What big or small things can we do to help people to have "exactly as much as they need"?

Have each person can draw or paint on their piece of paper. Tape or glue the original piece of paper back together on another A4 paper. They can also pick a word from the text to write on the paper.

Materials needed:

- ◆ 2 A4 papers
- ◆ Tape or glue
- ◆ Paint, markers or coloring pencils

Prayer

Jesus, in our life long journey, we sometimes see the desert. At that moment we feel fear, hunger and need. We worry about tomorrow and the days after that. We grumble, stress and stumble on facts. Please teach us everyday Lord to trust in you, and to deny the short happiness of greed in all its forms. Help us to have faith and hope, to place our worries in your hands. Just as you transformed the desert into a field of manna and quail for your people to harvest, transform our doubts into rejoicing. Amen.

A Primer on Rio+20

There are certain events that shift the thinking of the planet. The United Nations Conference on Economy and Development or “Earth Summit” in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil in 1992 is one. In this meeting of more than 100 heads of states and governments, the concerns of many people and civil society were finally addressed in a meaningful way. The conference itself agreed on several documents:

- ◆ The Rio Declaration on Environment and Development is a short document that lays out the principles of sustainable development. Human beings, while at the center of development, have the right to live in harmony with nature. The text balances the right to development and the eradication of poverty with environmental protection.
- ◆ The action plan of the conference was called Agenda 21. It attempted to apply the principles of sustainable development to the global, regional, national and local levels. In some parts

of the world, this approach was greeted with enthusiasm and local Agenda 21 groups sprouted.

- ◆ Forestry principles laid out ideas of how to protect forests especially in the South.
- ◆ In addition to these documents that were adopted in Rio, the conference is also regarded as the birthplace of three international treaties:
 1. The Convention on Biological Diversity seeks to protect species in their natural habitats while ensuring that different countries have the same access to use this richness economically.
 2. The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change seeks to mitigate the effects of climate change by reducing emissions of greenhouse gases. This convention was open for signatures by states in Rio and was then expanded 1997 with the Kyoto Protocol, the first legally binding mechanism to lower the emission of greenhouse gases.



3. The United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification is the sole international agreement linking environment and development to sustainable land management. It specifically addresses drylands, where some of the most vulnerable ecosystems and peoples can be found.

The outcomes of the Earth Summit were hailed by many as recognition of the perilous state of the planet, requiring global action. But looking back over the last 20 years, we see that many of the dreams of Rio did not come true. The situation has only gotten worse and action is more urgent than ever.

So in June 2012, the UN is convening a major follow up summit to Rio (there were already review conferences in 1997 and 2002). Many churches and civil society groups hope that such a conference will gather the necessary political will in order to address the challenges of climate change, biodiversity and poverty, among other issues. One thing is clear: success can't be achieved without advocacy from civil society, including Christians.

The conference, now called United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, or Rio +20, has two major themes:

- ◆ a green economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication;
- ◆ the institutional framework for sustainable development.

Both elements are controversial. The term green economy has drawn considerable criticism. Must environmental protection yield to economic concerns? Shouldn't it be the other way around? Are other aspects of sustainable development, like cultural and social sustainability, still regarded as important?

The governments of the world have agreed to an ambitious negotiation schedule in order to come up with an outcome statement all nations can agree on. Therefore, it is hard to give details in this publication because it is likely that the information is already outdated.

Even if you are reading this after Rio+20 has taken place, it is important to find out what the position of your government was at the meeting, and what follow-up actions will be taken.

Here are a few concerns that churches may advocate for in the negotiations in Rio and beyond:

- ◆ How should we describe the ethical obligation of humanity to live within its means? The classic definition of sustainable development does not give nature any rights: "Development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."
- ◆ Will the Rio negotiations highlight the rights of people, or side with corporations and states? How will the negotiations affect small farmers and indigenous peoples?
- ◆ Is it possible to bring agendas for environmental protection and human development closer together? It has been suggested that the world define global sustainable development goals that can be used together with the Millennium Development Goals.
- ◆ How will future generations be represented in discussions? Is the creation of an ombudsman for future generations a good idea?

Nature Games



Ecological justice is about both the rights of people as well as the rights of nature. But how well does each of us know our natural environment? What details do we overlook as we go about our daily lives?

In this section we present five games that can be used by children and youth groups of any age. We recommend playing them outdoors in a natural area like a forest. If that is not possible, any park or open space will work.

1. Caterpillar

Participants stand in a row and put their hands on the shoulders of the person in front of them. Then they close their eyes or are blindfolded. The caterpillar starts walking led by the “head”, or the first person in the row, who keeps their eyes open. The parts of the caterpillar do not speak and cautiously take guidance from the person in front of them. If he or she bends, then they bend too. If he or she takes a big step, they do the same. If the ground is safe, going bare foot might be an interesting experience. After the activity, reflect as a group. What did you learn? Did the ground beneath your feet feel different?

Venue: Any large open space
Materials: Blindfolds

2. Photo-Click

In this partner game, one player is the photographer, the other the camera. The person who is the camera closes their eyes. Then the photographer guides the camera to a scene that would make an interesting picture, such as a leaf, an insect, a viewpoint etc. Without talking, the photographer carefully positions the camera into the best angle to take the photo. When the camera is ready, the photographer touches his or her shoulder and says “click”. The camera then opens his or her eyes for a few seconds. Then the photographer searches for a new picture, and the process is repeated. After five photos are taken, the camera describes the photos she or he has taken to the photographer. The pair discusses what they have seen. They might return to the objects in order to compare their memories. Who has the clearer memory, the photographer or the camera? Finally, they change roles. It is important that both photographer and camera are silent during the exercise.

Venue: Any outdoor space, a forest or natural environment is recommended

3. Concert

This exercise fosters silence and concentration. All participants choose a quiet place where they would like to sit. They blindfold themselves and listen like they would if they were wearing headphones. They absorb the sounds and environment around them. This might be birds, cars on a road, the sun or wind on one’s skin. Participants should note every distinct sound that they hear.

After about 10 minutes, the leader calls the participants back. The group exchanges their experiences and what they heard. How many sounds did they hear in their quiet place? How long did it feel like time passed for?

Venue: Any quiet place outdoors
Materials: Blindfolds

4. My Tree Tells Me

Go to a forest or place with trees. Each participant chooses a tree and sits down comfortably. They each have a notepad and a pen with them. They close their eyes, listen to their tree, and feel the trunk at their back. They sit for fifteen minutes and write down everything the tree might have to tell them. What has it seen over the years? What does it think of the world?

When the time is up, the group reassembles. All participants read their stories aloud. The group can ask the writer questions, but they should not criticize the stories. After everyone has told their stories, discuss them as a group. What did they have in common? Is there anything to learn from listening to a tree?

Venue: Forest or park with trees

Materials: Paper and pen

5. Web of Life

This game introduces the idea of ecology and lets participants experience the importance of relationships. Every participant takes a card and writes on it one item in their natural environment that they believe is important. This could include for instance plants or insects, food, wild and domestic animals. The leader writes sun on her card, and pins it to their shirt. The leader also holds a ball of string.

The leader rolls the end of the string around his or her wrist and says: "I am the sun. I can live by myself. But many need me. They cannot live without me." Then the leader says the word that is on the card of the person standing closest to them, for example "grass".

The leader hands the ball of string to "grass", who then rolls it around his or her wrist and explains: "I am the grass. I need the warmth of the sun to grow."

Now the ball of string is given to the next participant whose object is believed to be in relationship with the previous one. The type of dependency is explained. Every participant rolls the string around his or her wrist and takes care that the string holds tension. This continues until everyone has been included. At the end, the ball of string comes back to the leader (sun).

The leader now asks the group what will happen if one element in this web of life becomes extinct. This can be demonstrated when the participant who symbolizes the object lets go of the string. The balance of nature is broken. However, it is still possible for the system of ecology to self-correct if another element picks up the string and holds it tight.

Venue: Any open space, indoor or outdoors

Materials: Ball of string, one card per person, marker



See it for yourself Films for Eco-Justice



Problems like climate change, environmental exploitation and natural disasters affect real people who each have a story to tell. Sometimes, a film can be the best way to learn about environmental problems because we can see them with our own eyes, and hear the stories of people affected from their own mouths.

In this section we present a series of short films that can be used for group settings. They are all freely available online and less than five minutes. The short films suggested here were winners at the fourth annual D&C International Film Competition.

Ripples (5:11 min)

<http://vimeo.com/32560675>

With powerful images and humor, Ripples tells the story of how people in a village in Bangladesh prepare for natural disasters as a result of climate change. Millions of people live in low-lying areas that are projected to be under water in just a few years. Floods are already frequent part of daily life. The film shows the resilience of the local population and the support by RDRS (an associated program of LWF World Service).

Discussion

1. If you lived in this village, which of the people shown in the film would you be?
2. What is the threat that villagers are working against?
3. How would you describe the solution that they are seeking? Are there any alternative solutions?
4. What environmental threats do you face in your daily life? Are you prepared?
5. What have you learned from the people shown in this film?

Carbon for water (5:28 min)

<http://goo.gl/xDWTo>

Ninety percent of people in Kenya's Western Province have to boil their water, using fuel wood from the local forest, before it is safe to drink. A new carbon reduction project aims to reduce carbon emissions by two million tons each year by providing 900,000 homes with water filters paid for through carbon credits.

Discussion

1. What injustices to people and nature are mentioned to in the film?
2. What makes the scheme "smart business" and not charity?
3. What are the different advantages of using these water filters over the traditional way?
4. The film suggests that carbon credits are "win-win" for both the local people and the company running it? Do you agree?
5. Is this eco-justice?

Powerful Hands (2:57 min)

<http://careclimatechange.org/hands>

This film by Care International shows how people around the world can become agents of change rather than victims of climate change.

Discussion

1. Which image in the film did you find most moving?
2. What can your hands do for eco-justice?
3. What would you say is the message of this film, using just two words? Do you agree with this message?



Good News for All

Bible Study on Luke 4:16-30

By Kristi Holmberg

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In this passage Jesus goes to his home of Nazareth to begin his public ministry. Jesus reads a passage from the prophet Isaiah in the synagogue. He says that the spirit has “anointed” him to bring good news to the poor, set the oppressed free and restore sight to the blind. Jesus is describing the “year of the Lord’s favor”. This verse refers to the book of Leviticus where a “year of release” or “year of Jubilee” took place that restored God’s vision to the world by redeeming injustices and forgiving grievances.

Jesus gets the attention of the people of Nazareth. Their eyes are “fastened” on him and they are surprised a man from Nazareth could fulfill God’s promises to them. But once they know that Jesus’ message is not only for them, there is an outburst and they kick Jesus out of the town. After this happens, Jesus says

“Truly I tell you, no prophet is accepted in his hometown.”

He says this is why Elijah and Elisha were sent to new places to proclaim the good news though there were needs in their own communities. The people of Nazareth ask, “Isn’t this Joseph’s son?” because they are questioning his claim to be the anointed one. How

could he be a prophet if he is from Nazareth? Jesus knows that they want to see signs of his power. But Jesus does not do it. Then, the people become angry and try to hurt him, but he pushes through the crowd and goes on his way.

The Gospel of Luke gives a lot of attention to people who are on the margins: children, women, the poor, slaves, prostitutes, widows, and gentiles. These people are often rejected by dominant society but accepted by Jesus. The prophecy in this passage meant that the years of waiting on God’s blessings had ended. The people in the synagogue were excited for the promise of God’s blessing, but they became resistant to Jesus’ words and kicked him out of the town because the message was inclusive to all people. The good news that Jesus was preaching was not only for the people of Israel. The gospel proclaimed that God’s justice was for all, and that there are no boundaries to his love.

Discussion

1. What is Jesus’ message about? Who is the good news for? Who do we exclude from receiving the good news?
2. Jesus preached that the good news is for all people, not just the people of Israel. The people in the synagogue were outraged by Jesus’ message and kicked him out of town.

Who might be the prophets in our own community who are rejected and thrown out? What is their message? How can we be open to the truths we do not want to hear?

3. What walls do we build in our communities that stop God's grace and love from touching all people? How do we break down the walls between people?
4. "The year of God's favor" refers to Jubilee, a year when all who are oppressed or imprisoned are set free. It marks a clean slate where God's kingdom reigns and all things are made right. What would it look like for a year of Jubilee to take place today in your community? In the world?

Activity

1. Hand out paper and pens for people to write on. Ask them to answer the following question in their own words and language.
2. Ask one person to read Luke 4:16-30 out loud and slowly. Before you begin, ask all people to listen for words that stand out to them. Invite them to write them down on their paper or speak them into the silence following the reading. Tell them not to explain the word.

3. Ask another person to read the passage for a second time. Ask participants to pay attention to images that come to mind during the reading. Then, invite them to draw the images or symbols on their sheet of paper. Invite them to describe out loud what they see. Tell them not to explain what the image means.
4. Ask another person to read the passage for a final time. Ask participants to listen for what the text is calling them to do in their own lives. Invite them to write the answers on the piece of paper and then share out loud with the group. What is the good news? Who is it for?

Closing Prayer

*Open our ears God,
to listen to your Good News.
Open our eyes
to see the injustice in our communities.
Open our minds
to imagine your vision for a peaceful world.
Open our arms
to connect with others in true community.
Open our hearts
to love and be gracious to all people,
for your love knows no limits or boundaries.
Strengthen and fill us with hope as we work towards a
green and just society. Amen.*



Ready for Change: Planning

No matter how strongly you believe in something, you need a good plan to be effective. The best plans are often simple, creative, and appeal to people's emotions. While you make your plan, we invite you to think through how it fulfills these criteria.*



Rational

The change you propose has to make sense.



Find the bright spots

Look for people and congregations already practicing ecological and social responsibility. What are they doing right? What are their concrete steps?



Emotional

People have to feel the change. They need to believe in your mission and feel compelled to act.



Script the critical moves

It is not enough to say, we should all be more responsible for our environment. What does that actually mean? What are the specific steps that need to be taken?

And if there is real resistance to one direction, perhaps there is an alternate way.



Shrink the change

Make the problem seem solvable. Don't start by asking people to make radical life changes, but show how taking small steps can make a major difference if many people join in.



Point to the destination

Talk about exactly what you would like to achieve for your congregation. Paint a mental picture (or draw an actual one) of your goal. Make it as vivid as possible.

What does it look like if the rights of people and nature were respected?



Ground yourself in faith

Ecological justice is not just a choice for Christians, but a mandate from the bible. The bible studies in this booklet make that clear. When you discuss ecological justice in your church, use bible stories to support your argument.

*The ideas in this section are based on the book *Switch: How to Change Things When Change is Hard* by Chip Heath and Dan Heath.

Ready for Change: Action

The change you are working for will probably not be achieved after one event. Changing hearts and minds and behavior, takes time. Here are some ideas for events promoting eco-justice in your community. Remember to always tell people the reason why you are doing what you are doing.



Worship service

Prepare and lead a special worship service. Consider doing so with other congregations and other churches.



Panel discussion

If you want to work on an issue that involves many different people, then it might be a good idea to invite some of them to a joint discussion. You may also want to invite elected officials or other community leaders.



Biking

Biking, like a march or a walk, is a great way of getting out and being visible in your community. It can also demonstrate the need for an improved infrastructure for alternative modes of transportation.



Local clean-up

Cleaning up part of your environment, like a stream or a park, is a good way to make a tangible impact as a group through public witness and action. Make sure to tell people why you are doing this.





Service actions

Participate in your community where strong hands are needed. Ask community organizations what they need and how you can help.



Art

Provide art supplies and invite people to create art that speaks to the message you are trying to achieve, such as the importance of nature in your community.



Support local food production

Invite your friends to a carbon-free picnic in the best local spot. This is an easy way to get everyone to participate and to highlight local and organic foods.



Sports

Organize a sporting event at a place at the center of your community. Display posters describing the change you wish to see.



Music

Invite local musicians and have a concert for your cause.



Film festival

Film is a great way to share information and inspire people to take action. Introduce sensitive issues by film, then host a discussion.



The Next Step: Sharing

Please don't forget to share with the greater LWF youth community your ideas and plans. Maybe someone else is doing something similar and has good additional ideas. We invite you to share your activities on the LWF Youth Facebook page. Take time to respond to the others. Take photos, write stories and post them online. Your actions can inspire us all.

***Based on <http://www.350.org/en/action-ideas>*







Closing Prayer



For your final activity, ask the participants to break into small groups. Assign each group a country that is part of the Lutheran communion (where other youth groups are also using this resource).

Provide each group with information about the main injustices, oppression, and needs that the partner country is dealing with. One place you can find such information by country is the CIA Fact Book online.

Have each group write a prayer for their assigned country. Include images, words, sounds and letters from that country into the prayer as much as possible.

Have the group decide when and how often they will pray for this country.

Return to large group and close in prayer.



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green and just